
# The Diplomacy of Resistance: Power, Hegemony and Nuclear Disarmament



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# The Diplomacy of Resistance: Power, Hegemony and Nuclear Disarmament

The humanitarian initiative for nuclear disarmament has challenged and transformed global nuclear politics. Aimed at delegitimising nuclear weapons as acceptable instruments of statecraft, the initiative has been backed by many civil society organisations and most non-nuclear-weapon states. The nuclear-armed states, however, have opposed the initiative, accusing it of undermining the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and destabilising nuclear politics. Conceptualising a 'diplomacy of resistance', this article positions the humanitarian initiative as a transnational social movement and traces its development through practices of resistance and counter-resistance. Drawing on Robert Cox's conception of resistance as counter-hegemonic and Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall's taxonomy of power, the article explores the nexus of power and resistance in global nuclear politics. We explain the humanitarian movement's specific aims and practices as a function of its champion's relative political weakness vis-à-vis the nuclear armed states. The movement's coherence and effectiveness, in turn, was fostered by a coalitional logic that allowed different identities of resistance to be steered towards a nuclear ban treaty within the UN's institutional framework.

**Keywords**: nuclear weapons, power, diplomacy, resistance, disarmament

## 1 Introduction

The rise to power of Donald J. Trump immediately provoked 'resistance' by groups threatened by his regime. From the 'Women's March on Washington' to countless White House leaks and the Boycott Trump! Campaign, concerned citizens have opted to use unorthodox means to minimise the president's political influence. But resistance, of course, is nothing new. Formed in response to the inauguration of Trump's predecessor, the Tea Party movement would resist the Obama administration's every move for the next eight years. Ghandi's 'passive resistance' to British rule in India catalysed the dismantlement of the European empires in the 1950s and 60s. Resistance movements during World War II were instrumental in bringing down Nazi Germany. Power, it seems, invariably fosters resistance, particularly when it is viewed as illegitimate.

Studies of power and resistance have tended to concentrate on domestic politics, that is, on how central authorities are resisted from 'below'. But resistance is not limited to the domestic sphere. In this article, we investigate the power–resistance nexus in international politics through the 'humanitarian initiative' on nuclear weapons and, in doing so, develop the concept of a 'diplomacy of resistance'. Our core argument is that the humanitarian initiative and attendant effort by a large group of non-nuclear-weapon states (NNWSs) and civil society actors to institute a global ban on nuclear weapons constitutes a process of collective resistance to entrenched power structures perpetuating the existence of nuclear weapons. We trace the forms of power being resisted and the forms of power exercised through and within the humanitarian initiative as a social movement. We argue that this movement corresponds closely to the form and function of a transnational advocacy network (TAN).[1] In doing so, the article makes the following three contributions to the literature on power, resistance and TANs: First, drawing on the taxonomy of power developed by IR theorists Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, we

[1] Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 1–38.

show that power and resistance should not be understood as opposites or as chains in a cause–effect relationship.[2] Instead, different forms, or assemblages, of power create the conditions for different forms of action, some of which are captured by the idea of resistance. Second, conceptualising a 'diplomacy of resistance', we highlight the ways in which diplomatic actors, institutions and practices are integral to what we identify as 'resistance' in global nuclear politics. We develop this through an explicit engagement with power that adds an important layer of understanding to existing accounts of TANs. Reading such networks as a form of resistance provides insights into the dynamics of contestation in multilateral diplomacy, the ways in which power is manifested in international relations and the relationships between action, legitimacy and international institutions. Third, relying on Barnett and Duvall's taxonomy, we analyse the practical realities of resistance in international politics. We find that the humanitarian initiative mobilised specific forms of compulsory, institutional and productive power to challenge the nuclear-armed states' structural power. Here, we argue that a successful diplomacy of resistance involves the exercise of power both internally (within the resistance network) and externally (vis-à-vis other actors as the objects of resistance).

The rest of this article is divided into three. In the first section, we discuss the phenomenon of resistance and its relation to power. We discuss the established major powers' dominance of multilateral nuclear disarmament diplomacy and conceptualise challenges to the status quo as resistance. In the second section, we turn to the politics of nuclear disarmament, providing an in-depth case study of the 'humanitarian initiative' and demand for a nuclear weapons prohibition treaty as a resistance *movement*. The third part concludes.

## 2 Analytical framework

### *2.1 Power and resistance*

Power is essential to any understanding of resistance. For Michel Foucault, 'there are no relations of power without resistances'.[3] For our purposes, Foucault's axiom may also be turned on its head: there are no resistances without relations of power. According to Barnett and Duvall, power and resistance are 'mutually implicated because the social relations that shape the ability of actors to control their own fates are frequently challenged and resisted'. In other words, resistance is what takes place on the 'receiving end of power'[4]. Thus conceived, a taxonomy of resistance flows naturally from the taxonomy of power that Barnett and Duvall have developed.[5]

Power, for Barnett and Duvall, is understood in term of social relations. It is a process rather than an attribute that they divide into four types: compulsory, institutional, structural and productive. Their first of these, 'compulsory power', refers to an actor's exercise of 'direct control' of another through threat, coercion and compellance. In international relations, direct

[2] See Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, 'Power in Global Governance', in *Power in Global Governance*, eds Barnett and Duvall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) and Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, 'Power in International Politics', *International Organization* 59, no. 1 (2005).
[3] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 142.
[4] Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, 'Power in Global Governance', in *Power in Global Governance*, eds Barnett and Duvall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 22.
[5] Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, 'Power in Global Governance', in *Power in Global Governance*, eds Barnett and Duvall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 22.

control is most dramatically demonstrated through coercive military domination. In global nuclear politics, the five nuclear-weapon states (NWSs) defined as such by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) have at their disposal military and technological assets far superior to most NNWSs, including the capacity to threaten nuclear violence. Combined, the military expenditure of these five amounts to approximately 60 per cent of the world's total military expenditure.[6] At least some NWSs have regularly used compulsory power in so-called counter-proliferation operations to police the nuclear order, as when a 'coalition of the willing' led by the United States and Britain invaded Iraq in 2003 on the pretext of stripping it of weapons of mass destruction. Compulsory power may also be exercised through inaction, as when one actor self-censors its behaviour out of fear of suffering consequences should it fail to do so. The fundamental claim of nuclear deterrence theory, for instance, is that potential aggressors stay their aggression out of fear of being subjected to nuclear violence. Barnett and Duvall claim that compulsory power generates attempts by those on the receiving end to access the resources or attributes that will enable them to neutralise it through their own reciprocal compulsory power.

Barnett and Duvall's second category of power is 'institutional'. Institutional power refers to an actor's ability to indirectly influence the behaviour of 'socially distant others' through legal rules and institutions. Unlike compulsory power, which works through 'direct' control, institutional power is mediated through 'diffuse' control via an institution. An example of institutional power of particular relevance to this article is the power vested in the 1968 NPT, through which the five states that had tested nuclear weapons by 1 January 1967 have successfully legitimised their own possession of nuclear weapons while at the same time delegitimising their acquisition by others.[7] Their legal status as 'nuclear-weapon states' is often interpreted (particularly by themselves) as a permanent and legitimate entitlement to possess nuclear weapons.[8] Institutional power, Barnett and Duvall claim, fosters resistance in the form of attempts to alter 'the rules of the game'. They note the overt challenge to the nuclear non-proliferation regime posed by India and Pakistan, as well as efforts by civil society organisations to advance women's rights within the context of human rights law as examples of resistance to institutional power by challenging the institutions in question.

The third and fourth types of power are 'structural' and 'productive' power. Unlike compulsory and institutional power, which have a form of coercive or constraining causal effect, structural and productive power influence actors through the constitution of their opportunities, interests and identities. Structural power involves the direct conditioning of specific actors' roles and opportunities through economic and political relations that advantage some and disadvantage others. The structural power enjoyed by the NWSs is significant. It takes the form of an oligarchic nuclear social structure that empowers the combined 'great power' role of permanent membership of the UN Security Council and NPT 'nuclear-weapon state' and disempowers non-NWSs and non-UNSC states. This nuclear social structure is embedded within global and hierarchical structures of capitalism and patriarchy. On the receiving end, structural power generates attempts by those in 'subordinate structural positions to reduce the inequality that

[6] Sam Perlo-Freeman et al., 'Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2015' (Stockholm: SIPRI, April 2016), 2.
[7] Nick Ritchie, 'Waiting for Kant', *International Affairs* 90, no. 3 (2014); Asli Ü. Bâli, 'Legality and Legitimacy in the Global Order', in *Legality and Legitimacy in Global Affairs*, eds Richard Falk, Mark Juergensmeyer, Vesselin Popovski (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
[8] Nick Ritchie, 'Legitimizing and Delegitimizing Nuclear Weapons', in *Viewing Nuclear Weapons through a Humanitarian Lens*, eds John Borrie and Tim Caughley (Geneva: UNIDIR, 2013), 48–9.

inheres in that relationship, as well as potentially to transform the structures that sustain it.'[9] Barnett and Duvall describe transnationally coordinated labour and anti-globalisation campaigns, as well as the push by developing states for a New International Economic Order during the 1970s as examples of this type of resistance. In the field of disarmament diplomacy, the repeated initiatives by groups of non-aligned states to 'democratise disarmament' and the efforts of peace groups and many NNWSs at increasing the possibilities for active engagement of civil society organisations in diplomatic processes provide examples of resistance to the structural power of the nuclear weapon states afforded by their 'structural positions'.[10]

Lastly, 'productive' or 'discursive'[11] power describes the way in which diffuse political domination is embedded in everyday practices, cultural narratives and discourses that set the parameters for political action and determine what counts as legitimate knowledge. Constituting actors as well as the world they inhabit, productive power is analogous to the Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony' – the ability of the ruling class to impose its definition of reality on the working class.[12] Key to this is Gramsci's notion of 'common sense', by which he referred to the set of values, norms and ideas that had become largely accepted in society and thereby constituted a hegemonic ideology.[13] In mainstream academic and media circles, nuclear security is often equated with nuclear non-proliferation; existing weapons – in particular those of the Western NWSs at the forefront of the non-proliferation agenda – are seldom seen as part of the problem.[14] In fact, the doctrine of nuclear deterrence as something practiced 'responsibly' by the established nuclear-armed states is routinely held up as the underlying cause of the 'long peace' between major powers after the end of World War II.[15] This nuclear peace hypothesis has now become conventional wisdom in many parts of the world.[16] Attention to the dynamics of productive power/resistance has traditionally been the business of poststructuralist thinkers. For Michel Foucault, for example, 'resistance was never about an *escape* or an *overcoming* of power relations, but about refashioning the subject within power'.[17] In the realm of nuclear politics, feminists have engaged in this refashioning by exposing the genderedness of nuclear discourse and policy, whilst Gusterson has exposed the Orientalist foundations of Western nuclear discourse.[18] The humanitarian initiative constituted an attempt at

[9] Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, 'Power in Global Governance', in *Power in Global Governance*, eds Barnett and Duval (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 23.

[10] Dimitris Bourantonis, 'Democratization, Decentralization, and Disarmament at the United Nations', *The International History Review* 15, no. 4 (1993); Lawrence S. Wittner, 'The Forgotten Years of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1975–78', *Journal of Peace Research* 40, no. 4 (2003).

[11] Stephen Gill, *Power and Resistance in the New World Order* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), xiv.

[12] Joseph V. Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 23–4.

[13] See Mark Rupert, 'Globalising common sense: a Marxian-Gramscian (re-)vision of the politics of governance/resistance', *Review of International Studies*, 29 (2003): 181–98.

[14] See Ritu Mathur, 'Sly civility and the paradox of equality/inequality in the nuclear order', *Critical Studies on Security* 4, no. 1 (2015); Campbell Craig and Jan Ruzicka, 'The Nonproliferation Complex', *Ethics & International Affairs* 27, no. 3 (2013).

[15] For a discussion of 'responsible nuclear sovereignty' see William Walker, 'The UK, Threshold Status, and Responsible Nuclear Sovereignty', *International Affairs* 86, no. 2 (2010).

[16] Benôit Pelopidas, 'A Bet Portrayed as a Certainty', in *The War That Must Never Be Fought*, eds Gorge P. Schultz and James E. Goodby (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2015).

[17] James Brassett, 'British Comedy, Global Resistance', *European Journal of International Relations* 22, no. 1 (2016): 174. Emphasis original.

[18] E.g. Jean B. Elshtain, 'Reflections on War and Political Discourse', *Political Theory* 13, no. 1 (1985); Carol Cohn, 'Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defence Intellectuals', *Signs* 12, no. 4 (1987); Hugh Gusterson, 'Nuclear Weapons and the Other in the Western Imagination', *Cultural Anthropology* 14, no. 1 (1999).

'reframing' the diplomatic debate on nuclear disarmament from a state security- and deterrence-oriented discussion to one based more firmly on humanitarian imperatives and human security, thereby 'reconstituting' nuclear actors in ways that change power relationships, as we explore further below.[19]

We find that Barnett and Duvall's taxonomy of power and resistance provides an excellent starting point for analysing the nexus of power and resistance in nuclear politics. However, their conceptualisation of resistance is unrefined. First, their binary distinction between power and resistance appears too simplistic. As we see it, power and resistance are neither separate phenomena nor chains in a simple cause–effect relationship. Building on a wider critique of traditional accounts of resistance, dissent and global civil society as too willing to treat 'global power and global resistance as discrete and separate objects of analysis',[20] we understand power and resistance as 'entangled' in complex social relations.[21] For example, an actor's ability to resist is itself a function of that actor's power – its 'power to resist'. And although it is often the case that power is exercised by the 'strong' and resisted by the 'weak', domination is often maintained by hegemonic resistance to emancipatory processes.[22] Indeed, the ability of the 'strong' to mobilise effective counter-resistance is a crucial aspect of their strength. Second, Barnett and Duvall's suggestion that power fosters resistance in its own image – that the exercising of *compulsory* power generates *compulsory* resistance and *institutional* power *institutional* resistance and so on – strikes us as empirically incorrect. In fact, the exercising or manifestation of one form of power – whether compulsory, institutional, structural or productive – often fosters resistance in the form of another. For example, imperial officers' use of compulsory power against colonial subjects was often resisted through art and literature that actualised productive power.[23] Religious fundamentalists regularly seek to resist the productive and structural power of the 'West' by compulsory means.[24] In the post-Cold War period, American compulsory power has often been resisted through 'soft balancing' initiatives aimed at changing or deepening international law.[25]

We argue that while it is useful to understand resistance as 'that which happens on the receiving end of power', practices of resistance are entangled in power structures and cannot be readily differentiated into corresponding categories of power/resistance. One must in any case distinguish between (1) the power structures and practices that generate or motivate resistance (i.e. the 'grounds' for resistance), (2) the power structures and practices resistors target or seek to change (i.e. the 'ends' of resistance) and (3) the enactment of resistance through practices that constitute different forms of power (i.e. the 'means' of resistance, sometimes referred to as a 'repertoire of contention'[26]).

### *2.2 Defining resistance*

[19] Espen B. Eide, Chair's Summary of the Oslo Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, 5 March 2013, https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/nuclear_summary/id716343/.
[20] Lara M. Coleman and Karen Tucker, 'Between Discipline and Dissent', *Globalizations* 8, no. 4 (2011): 400.
[21] Joanne P. Sharp et al., *Entanglements of Power* (London: Routledge, 2000), 2.
[22] See David C. Hoy, *Critical Resistance* (London: The MIT Press, 2004), 2.
[23] E.g. Charles Tripp, *The Power and the People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
[24] Mike Smith, *Boko Haram* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015).
[25] See e.g. T.V. Paul, 'Soft Balancing in the Age of US Primacy', *International Security* 30, no. 1 (2005).
[26] Charles Tilly, *The Contentious French* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

We view resistance as a 'practice'.[27] We are not the first to do this. James Brassett, for example, conceives of resistance as a 'performative' 'ethico-political' practice.[28] Our approach is slightly different. Heeding Morten Andersen and Iver Neumann's call to study practices as *models* rather than as conscious *performances*, we see the 'practice of resistance' first and foremost as an analytical construct.[29] This is not to say that resistance is not an empirical phenomenon – it is – only that its occurrence is determined by us, the researchers, and not necessarily those who practice it. While some of the individuals involved in the behaviour we describe readily see themselves as engaged in 'resistance', others might not recognise such a classification. We also recognise that defining what is being resisted, who the resistors are and who is being empowered is a contested process.[30]

A useful starting point for understanding how resistance is practiced in international politics is to consider what it is that is being resisted. In the case of the humanitarian initiative, the focus of resistance, in our view, is the set of structures and practices that selectively legitimise, regulate, and discipline the appropriation of nuclear weapons, technologies, materials and knowledge and, in doing so, perpetuate the risk of catastrophic nuclear violence. By this we mean established structures of power that privilege some states over others in terms of who is and is not permitted to possess certain nuclear technologies, such as weapons and enrichment plants, and to engage in certain practices, such as nuclear testing, nuclear deterrence and, potentially, nuclear use.[31] Structures are understood here in a sociological sense as enduring patterns of relations (military, political, economic, ideological) between social actors. These often coalesce in formal and informal institutions and tend to reflect hierarchical power relations between dominant and dominated or marginalised actors. Contesting power structures tends to involve denaturalising and delegitimising an established set of ideas, values, institutions and practices and legitimising of a different set based on an alternative vision of the future.[32]

Robert Cox's analysis of hegemony and counter-hegemony is helpful here. The prevailing power structures and practices of global nuclear politics can be described as 'hegemonic' in the sense in which Cox uses the term to describe 'a structure of values and understandings about the nature of order that permeates a whole system of states and non-state entities', one in which 'these values and understandings are relatively stable and unquestioned'. Hegemony derives from 'the ways of doing and thinking of the dominant strata of the dominant state or states' that come to constitute actors both directly (structural power) and indirectly (productive power).[33] Cox draws on Gramsci's analysis of hegemony, class and social change. He argues that creating an alternative politics means building alternative institutions, developing alternative intellectual resources and establishing networks between subordinate groups. This means 'actively building a counter-hegemony within an established hegemony whilst resisting the pressures and temptations to relapse into pursuit of incremental gains'.[34] This parallels the experience, practices and

[27] See Iver B. Neumann, 'Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn', *Millennium* 31, no. 3 (2002): 627.
[28] James Brassett, 'British Comedy, Global Resistance', *European Journal of International Relations* 22, no. 1 (2016): 170, 177.
[29] Morten S. Andersen and Iver B. Neumann, 'Practices as Models', *Millennium* 40, no. 3 (2012).
[30] For a discussion in relation to concept of global civil society, see Louise Amoore and Paul Langley, 'Ambiguities of Global Civil Society', *Review of International Studies* 30, no. 1 (2004): 105.
[31] For a more detailed discussion see Nick Ritchie 'Understanding Global Nuclear Order, Power, and Hegemony' presented at the European Initiative on Security Studies conference, 14 January 2017, University Panthéon-Assas, Paris. Contact the author for further details.
[32] Peter Willetts, *Non-Governmental Organisation in World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2011), ch. 5.
[33] Robert Cox and Timothy Sinclair, *Approaches to World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[34] Robert Cox, 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations', *Millennium* 12, no. 2 (1983): 165.

strategies of the humanitarian initiative as well as other TANs operating within niche policy areas and different contexts but embedded within broader social movements.

What qualifies as 'incremental gains' over more transformative measures is open to debate. The humanitarian initiative as a form of resistance centres on a specific policy domain rather than the more expansive form of counter-hegemony envisaged by Cox to realise an alternative form of state and society. Nevertheless, Cox is quite clear in his discussion of alternative social and political orders that these alternatives are limited to those 'which are feasible transformations of the existing world' based on historical processes. 'Improbable alternatives' are rejected along with the acceptance of the permanence of the existing order.[35] This is important because some have argued that the humanitarian initiative is not a novel or transformative development at all and that all it does is reproduce old narratives that cement the status quo.[36] Instead, a truly transformative move would require radical restructuring of global politics akin to the ideas of 'world government' advocated by 'nuclear realists' in the 1950s and 60s as the only solution to question of how humanity should respond to the invention of nuclear weapons.[37] Such critiques fail to understand the initiative as a form of resistance replete with discursive and diplomatic strategies to effect change through existing and new institutions and intellectual resources.

In standard usage, 'resistance' describes a wide range of movements and activities designed to challenge, undermine or transform established power structures.[38] These can be led by individuals, parties, NGOs, states, or multi-actor transnational coalitions and they can be understood as regressive or progressive. Owen Worth, for example, reminds us that resistance can be international or nationalist, progressive or reactionary, secular or religious, hateful or benevolent.[39] We understand the humanitarian initiative as a multi-layered resistance *movement*. Resistance movements tend to display the following features: First, as discussed above, acts of resistance *oppose* or challenge existing or emergent power, whether compulsory, institutional, structural or productive. The possibilities for successful resistance, however, is itself a function of the resistors' ability to exercise power. Second, resistance movements tend to rely on creativity and unorthodox methods to level the playing field with the powers that be by changing the structure and rules of the game.[40] Resistors' means or 'repertoire of contention' – striking, conceptual reframing, social media campaigning, violence – will typically be determined by norms and social mores, comparative advantages and opportunity costs, actors' agendas and identities, available resources and the responses of the powerful.[41] Third, the aims of resistance are typically couched in *normative* claims that contest the legitimacy of extant practices and power structures. Resistance from this standpoint is often mobilised by a sense of common struggle and solidarity against injustice and oppression, giving voice to the marginalise and silenced, and faith in the

[35] Robert Cox, 'Social Forces, States, and World Orders', *Millennium* 10, no. 2 (1982): 130.

[36] For example, Laura Considine, 'The "standardization of catastrophe": Nuclear disarmament, the Humanitarian Initiative and the politics of the unthinkable', *Millennium* 23, no. 3 (2016).

[37] See Rens van Munster and Casper Sylvest, 'Reclaiming nuclear politics? Nuclear realism, the H-bomb and globality', *Security Dialogue* 45, no. 6 (2015).

[38] For example, the collection in eds David Armstrong, Theo Farrell and Bice Maiguashca, *Governance and Resistance in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[39] Owen Worth, *Rethinking Hegemony* (London: Palgrave, 2015), 153.

[40] Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 1–38.

[41] Charles Tilly, *The Contentious French* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

possibility of change through an alternative vision of politics. Resistance to the major powers' nuclear hegemony, for example, has traditionally been justified through a mix of cosmopolitan understandings of international order and security, Third World solidarity and the nuclear-weapon states' legal obligation to disarm. Resistance, then, is generally a positive 'resistance for' some emancipatory change (whether reform, a Gramscian 'passive revolution', or more transformative, revolutionary change) though it can be limited to an identity-based or negative 'resistance against' something.[42]

Several historical and ongoing disarmament movements display the three features described above. Activities and campaigns as diverse as the 'Sahara marches' against French nuclear testing in the late 1950s and early 1960s,[43] the Mexican government's blocking of consensus at the 1990 NPT Review Conference,[44] the long campaign for a comprehensive ban against nuclear testing, the 'nuclear freeze movement' of the early 1980s and the intermittent demonstrations against nuclear-weapons convoys on Scottish roads may all be understood as forms of resistance.[45] We argue that a particularly powerful form of resistance in nuclear politics is the mobilisation of TANs. Such movements are often aimed at specific, limited objectives, but may be understood more broadly as concerted efforts by a diverse constellation of actors to challenge entrenched power structures, particularly the injustice, inequality and dangers of the NPT nuclear control regime. The construction of nuclear danger has been a central feature of the humanitarian initiative. Transnational advocacy networks are often reduced to the activities of NGOs and 'global civil society'. But as Keck and Sikkink argue, TANs are not just civil society phenomena. The humanitarian initiative TAN, for example, encompasses overlapping networks of NGOs, IGOs, the Hibakusha, think-tanks, diplomats, policy-makers, parliamentarians, UN agencies, religious bodies, protest groups, and so on. The humanitarian initiative TAN should therefore be understood as a network of networks. The most prominent of these was the NGO network orchestrated by ICAN. The inter-governmental network(s) of the humanitarian initiative are far less visible. It is the extent to which this network of networks has engaged in official diplomatic arenas that we identify a 'diplomacy of resistance'.

In addition to displaying the three features of resistance described above (opposition to extant or emergent power structures; creativity; normative anchoring), the diplomacy of resistance may be identified by more specific traits. First, although resistance may 'be expressed in multifaceted ways and in diverse locations',[46] what we describe as the diplomacy of resistance is fully or in part enacted in and through traditional diplomatic arenas like formal multilateral conferences and informal 'track-II' meetings and is aimed, fully or in part, at influencing public (international) policy. Formal diplomatic arenas are generally inclusive and established state-based sites of institutional power. These sites, such as NPT review conferences, offer limited access to non-state actors and networks, but the focus on the state and affecting state narratives, policies, and behaviours through state-based international institutions is central. Opportunities for

[42] William DeMars and Dennis Dijkzeul, 'Introduction: NGOing', in *The NGO Challenge for International Relations Theory*, eds DeMars and Dijkzeul (London: Routledge, 2015); Robert Cox, 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations', *Millennium* 12, no. 2 (1983).

[43] See Jean Allman, 'Nuclear Imperialism and the Pan-African Struggle for Peace and Freedom', *Souls* 10, no. 2 (2008).

[44] See Rebecca Johnson, *Unfinished Business* (Geneva: UNIDIR, 2009), 34.

[45] See e.g. *The Scotsman,* 'Pensioner Stops Nuclear Weapon Convoy in Stirling', 16 September 2016, http://www.scotsman.com/news/video-pensioner-stops-nuclear-weapon-convoy-in-stirling-1-4232337.

[46] Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguascha, 'Rethinking Globalised Resistance', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 9, no. 2 (2007): 296.

participation empowers 'global civil society' but at the same time legitimises the practices of states and state-based international institutions.

Second, the diplomacy of resistance is usually heterogeneous. While resistance movements are typically united by a core set of 'principled ideas' or values,[47] TANs are able to mobilise and align a plurality of actors that have latent agendas of their own.[48] What brings them together is a focus on change through state-centric strategies of diplomatic engagement.

Third, possibilities for resistance are shaped by past experiences that have generated significant change through disarmament diplomacy. It is a well-documented empirical tendency that resistance and protest activities cluster temporally in a cyclical fashion.[49] The concept of protest cycles has been used productively in analyses of waves of mobilisation in domestic affairs, including labour strikes,[50] secessionism,[51] and peace movements, [52] and the history of multilateral nuclear disarmament diplomacy is sprinkled with cycles of protest and resistance.[53] Formative experiences from previous cycles that supported the humanitarian initiative include the mobilisation of movements to end nuclear testing, to authorise an advisory opinion on the threat or use of nuclear weapons by the International Court of Justice, to prohibit anti-personnel landmines and later to prohibit cluster munitions. These in turn were shaped by broader shifts in the salience of rights in global politics, the diffusion of power to a plurality of state and non-state actors, changing conceptions of unacceptable harm to civilians in conflict, contagious frustration with the slow pace of nuclear stockpile reductions and the slow but steady empowerment of women and gender perspectives in disarmament diplomacy. The broader context here is how the capacity for extraordinary levels of rapid and incontestable violence has generated deep and abiding concern about the use, spread, testing and existence nuclear weapons, even as they were being invented through the Manhattan Project.[54] This has left nuclear politics open to multiple contestations and resistances through the nuclear age.

Fourth, the diplomacy of resistance tends to connect the object of resistance with wider structures and global political challenges. In nuclear politics, those engaged in the diplomacy of resistance have connected *nuclear* structures of power, *nuclear* inequalities and *nuclear* violence with a wider set of global structural hierarchies, inequalities and violent practices.[55] For example, individuals working to further the humanitarian initiative have drawn connections between nuclear politics and global environmental, post-colonial, militarist and gendered power structures.

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[47] Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, 'Transnational Advocacy Networks in International and Regional Politics', *International Social Science Journal* 51, no. 159 (1999).

[48] William DeMars and Dennis Dijkzeul, 'Introduction: NGOing', in *The NGO Challenge for International Relations Theory*, eds DeMars and Dijkzeul (London: Routledge, 2015).

[49] David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, 'Master Frames and Cycles of Protest', in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, eds Aldon D. Morris and Carol M. Mueller (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1992), 133.

[50] Sidney Tarrow, 'Cycles of Collective Action', *Social Science History* 17, no. 2 (1993): 284.

[51] E.g. Benjamín Tejerina, 'Protest Cycle, Political Violence and Social Movements in the Basque Country', *Nations and Nationalism* 7, no. 1 (2001).

[52] E.g. David S. Meyer, 'Protest Cycles and Political Process: American Peace Movements in the Nuclear Age', *Political Research Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (1993): 452.

[53] Kjølv Egeland, 'Punctuated Equilibrium in Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament', *Peace Review* 28, no. 3 (2016).

[54] For example, Nina Tannenwald, 'The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use', *International Security* 53, no. 3 (1999).

[55] See Hugh Gusterson, 'Nuclear Weapons and the Other in the Western Imagination', *Cultural Anthropology* 14, no. 1 (1999).

This is a familiar process understood in social movement theory and NGO studies as 'bridging'[56] or 'linkage'[57]: building transnational networks with multiple partners in overlapping issue areas across national–international, society–state and public–private divisions. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), one of the key actors of the humanitarian initiative, acknowledged that a humanitarian approach to nuclear weapons would allow them to 'tap new constituencies and broaden the movement working against nuclear weapons'.[58]

Fifth, the diplomacy of resistance is characterised by a broadening sensitivity to the ways in which gender connects with disarmament diplomacy. This has been particularly important for the humanitarian initiative in a number of ways. First, the challenge to the structural power of nuclear weapons in global politics has been linked to a broader challenge to militarism and its connections with patriarchy.[59] Second, women (as agents) and gender (as a power structure and subject of discussion) have become much more visible in the discourses, agendas and practices of nuclear disarmament diplomacy. Women and feminists have a long track record in nuclear protest and disarmament, but this has not corresponded to equal representation of women in disarmament diplomacy or gender as a focus of disarmament diplomacy.[60] That has changed through the humanitarian initiative and broader political changes, such as the growing demand for women to be represented on diplomatic and academic expert panels and related discussions,[61] the comprehensive incorporation of gender perspectives across the foreign policies of states such as Ireland and Sweden, the adoption of the landmark UN Security Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security in 2000, greater access to diplomatic processes of civil society organisations, many of which are either led by women or have high profile female experts, and foregrounding gender in analysis and advocacy.[62] Third, the discourse on the humanitarian effects of nuclear weapons has linked to women's rights, conflict and development, where a focus on gender has become embedded and brought the specific effects of nuclear violence on women and girls to the fore.

## 3 The humanitarian initiative: resisting nuclear hegemony



[56] William DeMars and Dennis Dijkzeul, 'Introduction: NGOing', in *The NGO Challenge for International Relations Theory*, eds DeMars and Dijkzeul (London: Routledge, 2015), 5.
[57] Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, 'Transnational Advocacy Networks in International and Regional Politics', *International Social Science Journal* 51, no. 159 (1999): 93.
[58] Magnus Løvold, Beatrice Fihn and Thomas Nash, 'Humanitarian Perspectives and the Campaign for an International Ban on Nuclear Weapons', in *Viewing Nuclear Weapons Through a Humanitarian Lens*, eds John Borrie and Tim Caughley (Geneva: UNIDIR, 2013), 147.
[59] Carol Cohn, Felicity Hill and Sara Ruddick, 'The Relevance of Gender for Eliminating Weapons of Mass Destruction', Stockholm (December 2005).
[60] John Borrie et al., *Gender, Development and Nuclear Weapons* (Olso and Geneva: ILPI and the UNIDIR, 2016).
[61] Article 36, 'Women and Multilateral Disarmament Forums' (London, October 2015), http://www.article36.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Underrepresentation-women-FINAL1.pdf.
[62] For example Beatrice Fihn at ICAN, Rebecca Johnson at the Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy, Patricia Lewis at Chatham House, Ray Acheson at Reaching Critical Will, Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Grethe Østern at Norwegian Peoples Aid, Elizabeth Minor at Article 36, Sara Sekkenes at UNDP, Josefin Lind and Clara Levin at Swedish Physicians against Nuclear Weapons and Mary Wareham at Human Rights Watch.

The 'humanitarian initiative' and campaign for a nuclear weapons prohibition treaty gathered momentum in the years after 2010.[63] Using innovative diplomatic tactics, the founders of the initiative built a broad coalition of actors to challenge the creeping permanence of nuclear weapons in global politics and stagnation of disarmament diplomacy. Significantly boosting the overall volume and intensity of anti-nuclear advocacy, the movement could be understood as a 'cycle of protest' in multilateral nuclear politics.[64] In the following, we first discuss the motives and political ends of the supporters of the humanitarian initiative. Next, we analyse the ways in which the humanitarian initiative's proponents exercised resistance to further their aims.

The humanitarian initiative originated in a series of casual meetings (lunches) in 2009–2010 of individuals who had collaborated on the 'Oslo process' to ban cluster munitions in the preceding years. Many NNWS officials had ostensibly grown quite sceptical about what could be achieved on nuclear disarmament within the NPT framework and were eager to find new ways of inducing change.[65] Pivoting off the fractious NPT Review Conference in 2005 and the success of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in 2008, some had come to believe that recasting nuclear disarmament diplomacy in humanitarian terms could be a way of changing a stale debate.[66] It seemed clear to them that what the disarmament process needed was not some ingenious technical fix or diplomatic horse-trade, but a fundamental normative reset. As long as nuclear weapons were seen as legitimate or even prestigious instruments of statecraft, they believed, disarmament would remain a Sisyphean task. Reasoning that the best way of expediting lasting change in global nuclear politics was to change nuclear culture, the group of people that initiated the humanitarian initiative implicitly relied on the Gramscian assumption that politics is 'downstream' from culture. In Gramscian terms, the hegemonic ideology of nuclear weapons and nuclear discourses that selectively value and legitimise nuclear weapons – nuclear 'common sense' – needed to change in order to undermine hierarchical political structures of nuclear power.

Employing the power-analytical perspective laid out above, we argue that the humanitarian initiative was motivated by a desire to eliminate, though nuclear disarmament, the nuclear-armed states' ability to inflict catastrophic nuclear violence on societies (including their own). The initiative was, in other words, formed in opposition to the nuclear-armed states' latent *compulsory* power, to wit, the nuclear powers' 'direct control' over 'the conditions of existence' of other states and indeed all human civilisation.[67] To further their goal of disarmament, however, the resistors took aim at the *structural* and *productive* relations of power that comprise and legitimise the status quo. Keen to challenge the structure of nuclear politics as a two-tiered hierarchy of 'nuclear' and 'non-nuclear'-weapon states, the resistors sought to comprehensively delegitimise nuclear weapons. The aim of the resistors, in this view, was to unsettle the

[63] See Elizabeth Minor, 'Changing the Discourse on Nuclear Weapons', *International Review of the Red Cross* 97, no. 899 (2015); Alexander Kmentt, 'Development of the international initiative on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and its effect on the nuclear weapons debate', *International Review of the Red Cross* 97, no. 899 (2015).
[64] See in particular Sidney Tarrow, *Struggle, Politics, and Reform* (Center for International Studies: Cornell University, 1989); David S. Meyer, 'Protest and Political Opportunities', *Annual Review of Sociology* 30 (2004).
[65] Interview with NNWS official, Geneva, 7 January 2016.
[66] For example, Patricia Lewis, 'A New Approach to Nuclear Disarmament: Learning from International Humanitarian Law Success', ICNND Research Report No. 13 (2009); Steffen Kongstad (Director General, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs), 'A Nordic Initiative for Nuclear Abolition', hosted by Soka Gakkai International (SGI), International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO) and Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) (15 April 2009).
[67] Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, 'Power in International Politics', *International Organization* 59, no. 1 (2005): 48.

hierarchical structure of nuclear politics through influencing the cultural narratives and representations that make up the 'nuclear discourse'. By changing the discourse, the resistors sought to refashion nuclear actors' subjectivities and disrupt nuclear hegemony.

The purpose of the humanitarian initiative was, and remains, to resist nuclear hegemony through delegitimising nuclear weapons. Playing on a varied repertoire of contention, the humanitarian initiative's supporters have pursued this aim in a number of ways. For example, they have gathered and disseminated information about the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, mobilised for political change through an overt 'resistance rhetoric' and adopted a legally binding instrument banning nuclear weapons. In doing so, the actors driving the humanitarian initiative have exercised compulsory, institutional and productive power to target the structural power of nuclear hierarchy.

### *3.1 'Reframing' nuclear weapons in disarmament diplomacy*

The resistors' attempts at exercising productive power is the most appropriate starting point for analysis.[68] The most straightforward means of changing the nuclear discourse, after all, was to use rhetoric, information and the testimonies of victims of nuclear violence – what Keck and Sikkink call 'information politics' – to challenge prevailing myths and preconceptions. The resistors' first move was to instigate a basic discursive 'reframing' of nuclear disarmament.[69] Strategically advancing an alternative political narrative in which nuclear weapons were morally and legally unacceptable on humanitarian grounds, the initiative's architects were engaged in what Finnemore and Sikkink call 'strategic social construction'.[70] They were attempting to shift the debate away from the traditional focus on narrow national security considerations and towards a more holistic concern with human security and international law. By changing understandings about nuclear weapons, the expectation is that actors' nuclear identities will shift and with them specific nuclear interests, in this case to a collective interest in disarmament. At the 2010 NPT Review Conference, a small group of states (most prominently Austria, Mexico, Norway and Switzerland) pressed successfully for the inclusion in the final document of an acknowledgement that 'any use' of nuclear weapons would have 'catastrophic humanitarian consequences'.[71] For casual readers, this statement might seem platitudinous, but in the world of nuclear diplomacy, this concession by the NWSs was significant. In practical terms, it gave advocates of disarmament political cover to pursue more radical disarmament initiatives under the banner of 'humanitarian disarmament'.[72]

In 2012, a first of several joint statements on the 'humanitarian dimension' of nuclear disarmament was delivered to the PrepCom by the Swiss delegation. The 16 states that supported the statement maintained that, since the use of nuclear weapons would have 'immense humanitarian consequences', it was of 'the outmost importance' that nuclear weapons 'never be

[68] See Anna Holzscheiter, 'Discourse as Capability', *Millenium* 33, no. 3 (2005).
[69] See John Borrie, 'Humanitarian Reframing of Nuclear Weapons and the Logic of a Ban', *International Affairs* 90, no. 3 (2014).
[70] Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change', *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 910.
[71] NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I), New York (2010), para. I(a)(v).
[72] See Denice Garcia, 'Humanitarian Security Regimes', *International Affairs* 91, no. 1 (2015).

used again, under any circumstances.'[73] Over the next few years, similar joint statements were made at multilateral conferences on behalf of an ever-growing group of NNWSs. Aiming to leverage the NNWSs' collective strength in numbers, the states and NGOs promoting the initiative were eager to get as many states as possible on board. While the first joint statement was supported by 16 states, the sixth and last, read out by the Austrian delegation to the 2015 NPT Review Conference, was backed by 156 NNWSs. The humanitarian frame was further developed at UN Open-Ended Working Groups on nuclear disarmament in 2013 and 2016 and at a series of ad hoc inter-governmental conferences 'on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons' in 2013–2014. The latter – in Oslo (Norway), Nayarit (Mexico), and Vienna (Austria) – provided an arena for state and non-state actors to develop a common 'humanitarian perspective' on nuclear disarmament based on existing and new empirical research on the humanitarian, social and environmental effects of nuclear detonations that proved to be high in demand: more states attended the ad hoc humanitarian conferences in 2013 and 2014 than the meetings of the NPT review cycle in the same years.[74]

The explicit aim of the humanitarian initiative was to delegitimise nuclear weapons by challenging and transforming the established nuclear discourse. This was a significant change. The focus was no longer on delegitimising specific nuclear practices, like testing, first use, or arms build-ups, but on the weapons themselves and, by extension, the practice of nuclear deterrence. Wrapping up the first conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons in March 2013, arguably the initiative's break-through moment, the conference's host, then foreign minister of Norway, Espen Barth Eide, said the conference had 'succeeded in reframing the issue of nuclear weapons by introducing the humanitarian impacts and humanitarian concerns at the very centre of the discourse.' Placing humanitarian values front and centre, he argued, 'it becomes clear that [nuclear disarmament] is everybody's concern and that it is equally legitimate for nuclear and non-nuclear states alike to care about this issue.'[75] Another key individual in the humanitarian actor-network, Austria's ambassador for disarmament, Alexander Kmentt, formulated the problem in the following way a few weeks later:

> [T]he discourse about nuclear weapons needs to be fundamentally changed. We will only manage the challenges posed by nuclear weapons if we move away from a debate that is still dominated by outdated military security concepts originating from cold war enemy and threat perceptions. Instead, we need to draw conclusions from our common understanding that any use of nuclear weapons would cause catastrophic consequences and be devastating in its effects for the whole world and all of humankind.[76]

To turn the humanitarian 'counter-hegemony' into a genuine ideological alternative to the status quo, the resistors needed to fill the new frame with content; for the humanitarian frame to rattle

[73] Switzerland on behalf of 16 states, 2012 NPT PrepCom, 2 May 2012, http://reachingcriticalwill.org/documents/statements?toolbar_year=2012&toolbar_forum=2&toolbar_country=217&toolbar_topic=0.
[74] ILPI, 'Counting to Zero', 10th edition, December 2016, http://nwp.ilpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/SF_BASIC-INDICATORS-2016B_FULLC.pdf.
[75] Espen B. Eide, Final Remarks at the Oslo Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, 5 March 2013, https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/weapons_final/id716983/.
[76] Austria, statement to the 2013 NPT PrepCom, Geneva, 24 April, http://reachingcriticalwill.org/documents/statements?toolbar_year=2013&toolbar_forum=2&toolbar_country=16&toolbar_topic=0.

the established nuclear discourse, it needed to be furnished, amplified, and embedded by international actors. This led the resistors to a second move: to mobilise and organise a 'transnational advocacy network' (TAN) of the type theorised by IR scholars Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink.[77] This was concurrent with, and essential to, the reframing of nuclear weapons. In many ways, this reframing process *was* the humanitarian initiative in terms of how it was adapted, developed and advocated by its overlapping networks of actors.

### *3.2. Building a transnational advocacy network*

TANs rely on many of the 'strategies, tactics, and patterns of influence' of social movements to challenge and contest norms.[78] Rooted in what Keck and Sikkink call 'principled ideas' – in this case the idea that the humanitarian effects of nuclear conflict are unacceptable and that nuclear disarmament politics must change as a result – the humanitarian initiative was comprised of 'international and domestic NGOs, research and advocacy organisations, local social movements, foundations, the media, churches, trade unions, consumer organizations, intellectuals, parts of regional and international intergovernmental organizations, and parts of executive and/or parliamentary branches of governments'.[79] At the heart of the network, serving as orchestrators and mobilisers, were ICAN and the handful of NGOs that made up its Steering Group,[80] a group of states (especially the 16 that signed the first 'joint statement on the humanitarian dimension of nuclear disarmament' delivered at the 2012 NPT Preparatory Committee[81]), and a number of IGOs and think-tanks (such as United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the Oslo-based International Law and Policy Institute (ILPI)). States were key to this process in terms of their empowerment as decision-making actors in diplomatic fora but often working hand-in-glove with civil society organisations.

The formation of the TAN promoting the humanitarian initiative was in part organic and in part intentional. It emerged from existing networks (for example around the Convention on Cluster Munitions) and steadily enrolled other actors and networks. The development and coordination of the TAN involved the use of power by the initiative's core funders and leading NGOs. This is often sidelined as Miles Kahler remind us in his study of networks, 'Network analysis has too often obscured or ignored questions of network power and power within networks, portraying networks as an antithesis of the hierarchical exercise of power'.[82] Power was exercised in the humanitarian initiative's networks through the forging of solidarity around a core

[77] Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, 'Transnational Advocacy Networks in International and Regional Politics', *International Social Science Journal* 51, no. 159 (1999).
[78] Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, 'Transnational Advocacy Networks in International and Regional Politics', *International Social Science Journal* 51, no. 159 (1999): 91.
[79] Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, 'Transnational Advocacy Networks in International and Regional Politics', *International Social Science Journal* 51, no. 159 (1999): 91–2.
[80] The Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy, Article 36, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, Latin America Human Security Network, Norwegian People's Aid, PAX, Peace Boat, Swedish Physicians against Nuclear Weapons, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and Zambian Healthworkers for Social Responsibility.
[81] Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, Holy See, Egypt, Indonesia, Ireland, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Philippines, South Africa, Switzerland.
[82] Miles Kahler, 'Network Politics; Power, Agency, and Governance' in *Networked Politics: Agency, Power, and Governance*, ed. Kahler (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 3.

purpose, through the network's nodes of connectivity that acted as informal 'gatekeepers' and 'NGO superpowers', through strategic choices (such as funding and resource distribution) that shaped the structure of the network, and through the contested ways in which the humanitarian initiative 'movement' defined a nuclear weapons ban treaty as its obvious purpose.[83] Moreover, the category of 'global civil society', with which many of the humanitarian initiative's actors identify, is routinely characterised as an agent of empowerment, protest and resistance. The ways in which it is 'constituted by the highly differentiated politics of power' and exercises control, exclusion and discipline is often hidden, as Amoore and Langley demonstrate.[84] For example, civil society voices that were sceptical or critical of a nuclear weapons ban treaty were typically excluded.

On the face of it, there is no shortage of NGOs and academic programmes fully or in part devoted to reducing nuclear dangers. Yet, as Campbell Craig and Jan Ruzicka have documented, most of the NGOs, think tanks and university programmes that make up the 'non-proliferation complex' are centred in and on the US and are politically and financially dependent on nuclear-dependent states or US foundations. As a consequence, the non-proliferation complex overwhelmingly advises incremental and cautious disarmament goals, primarily focussing on the US' non-proliferation and arms control agenda.[85] The architects of the humanitarian reframing consequently saw a need to identify and support civil society actors with more radical perspectives that could augment the humanitarian reframing and propose political actions. Academics from think tanks like UNIDIR and ILPI, known to the humanitarian initiative's founders from the cluster munitions process, received funding (primarily from the Norwegian government) for multiple years of research and outreach on the humanitarian approach to nuclear disarmament. NGOs that had been highly effective in pushing for change in related fields – Article 36, Reaching Critical Will, Norwegian People's Aid and others – received money to vamp up their work on the nuclear question. What in 2012 was still a relatively small campaign for nuclear disarmament – the Australian-based International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons – was chosen to chaperone a 'new' civil society movement. ICAN was given financial and administrative help to set up and run an office in Geneva and was made the Norwegian government's official civil society partner at the Oslo Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in March 2013.[86] This prepared the grounds for a re-organisation (or re-networking) of the nuclear disarmament NGO community. Together, these actors sought to actively build a 'counter-hegemony within an established hegemony' through a process of ideological contestation.[87] This had both iconoclastic and innovative aspects; while old truths were challenged, new concepts and information was brought to the fore. ICAN's role as a coalition of several hundred NGOs and affiliates across over 100 countries was central to this process. This was recognised in October 2017 when it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

The humanitarian values and international humanitarian law in which the network was rooted resonated with disparate actors and constituencies, from conservative religious institutions

[83] See Charli Carpenter, 'Vetting the Advocacy Agenda: Network Centrality and the Paradox of Weapons Norms', *International Organization,* 65, no. 1 (2011); Lara M. Coleman and Karen Tucker, 'Between Discipline and Dissent', *Globalizations* 8, no. 4 (2011).
[84] Louise Amoore and Paul Langley, 'Ambiguities of Global Civil Society', *Review of International Studies* 30, no. 1 (2004): 99.
[85] Campbell Craig and Jan Ruzicka, 'The Nonproliferation Complex', *Ethics & International Affairs* 27, no. 3 (2013).
[86] Interview with NNWS official, Geneva, 7 January 2016.
[87] Robert Cox, 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations', *Millennium* 12, no. 2 (1983): 165.

and peace groups to liberal aid organisations, specialised disarmament NGOs and states from all continents. The choice of an inclusive and (on the face of it) politically unthreatening humanitarian frame was hardly accidental. Given the vast power asymmetry between the nuclear-armed states and their supporters, on the one hand, and those demanding disarmament, on the other, it would be crucial for the latter to mobilise as many allies as possible through collective action around a common theme.[88] The humanitarian message would be difficult to rebuff both for potential supporters and for the nuclear-armed states and their allies. The message reflected some of the core values of many of these states, their commitments to the international rule of law including humanitarian law, as well as the preamble to the NPT. From around 2012 onwards, the expanding TAN worked hard to develop the new framing, cascade it through established and new international diplomatic fora, and to develop and coordinate support from a host of different actors that formed an expanding network of networks.

Through its application of productive power, the humanitarian initiative TAN developed a clear and focussed narrative representing nuclear disarmament as an urgent, humanitarian imperative.[89] Traditionally a somewhat discrete area of international policy, nuclear disarmament was placed firmly in the context both of 'humanitarian disarmament', a framework that had underpinned the campaigns to prohibit anti-personal mines and cluster munitions convention, and of other 'weapons of mass destruction'. The convening of the first Humanitarian Disarmament Campaigns Summit in 2012 was symptomatic of this wider reframing of the control and elimination of indiscriminate weapons.

### *3.3 Mobilising diplomacy through 'resistance rhetoric'*

A third form of productive power exercised through the humanitarian initiative TAN's public outreach has been the development of an overt 'resistance rhetoric'. Core members of the TAN have cast their agency in terms of 'revolution' and 'revolt', portraying their advocacy as a just struggle against the onerous domination of illegitimate nuclear power structures. While explicit references to struggle and resistance may in part reflect the instinctive views of certain individuals, the rhetoric seems to have had at least two instrumental functions. First, by representing the present as an extraordinary situation and the movement as being in dire need of reinforcement, the resistance rhetoric served to mobilise support for the cause. Second, by alluding to heroic struggles against oppressive structures, the resistance rhetoric calls on the humanitarian initiative's supporters to stand defiant in the face of expected counter-resistance by the major powers and their allies seeking to perpetuate those structures.

From a theoretical perspective, the purpose of these discursive shifts was to transform the subjectivities of core actors; while the NNWSs would be redefined from passive or 'subaltern' bystanders to active stakeholders in humanitarian diplomacy, the NWSs' would be recast from 'responsible nuclear sovereigns' entitled to practice nuclear deterrence to irresponsible possessors

[88] Tom Long, 'Small States, Great Power? Gaining Influence Through Intrinsic, Derivative, and Collective Power', *International Studies Review* 19, no. 2 (2016). Actor-network theory has been applied to nuclear weapons and disarmament in Nick Ritchie, 'Relinquishing nuclear weapons: identities, networks and the British bomb', *International Affairs* 86, no. 2 (2010); Steven Flank, 'Exploding the Black Box', *Security Studies* 3, no. 2 (1993); Mike Bourne, 'Invention and uninvention in nuclear weapons politics', *Critical Studies on Security* 4, no. 1 (2016).

[89] Magnus Løvold, Beatrice Fihn and Thomas Nash, 'Humanitarian Perspectives and the Campaign for an International Ban on Nuclear Weapons', in *Viewing Nuclear Weapons Through a Humanitarian Lens*, eds John Borrie and Tim Caughley (Geneva: UNIDIR, 2013), 146.

of uncivilised weapons of mass destruction. Particular subjectivities of nuclear victim, nuclear disarmer, and nuclear resistor were empowered within the discourse, the nuclear possessors and their enablers were 'othered' as 'anti-humanitarian'; while the dependence of the nuclear-armed states and their allies on nuclear weapons was framed as illegitimate and oppressive, the humanitarian initiative was portrayed as legitimate and emancipatory. These self–other constructions were arguably essential for sustaining the TAN both in terms of solidarity and in terms of enabling the moral humanitarian challenge through reframing to make political sense. Matthew Bolton and Elizabeth Minor have argued that ICAN's strategy marked the direct application of critical, post-positivist IR theory to practical multilateral diplomacy.[90] ICAN campaigners are consciously aware of the (productive) power of culture and language, Bolton and Minor argue. ICAN's public communication is carefully thought through and tailored; discursive representations and metaphors are deliberately employed as instruments in an asymmetric political conflict with the apologists of nuclear weapons and deterrence.

'Resistance rhetoric' has been used in practice in a number of ways by those that are either identified or self-identify as part of 'global civil society'. In a 2015 article for the *Huffington Post*, ICAN's executive director, Beatrice Fihn, points out that the humanitarian initiative has been called an 'uprising', a 'revolution', and 'a fight against nuclear apartheid'.[91] The humanitarian movement, Fihn argues, reflects a 'battle for power' in which NNWSs are attempting to take 'control over the discussion' and to 'forge their own path' to achieve progress on nuclear disarmament. This statement should not be understood merely as a description of an empirical process. Fihn's observation is also intended to have a political effect; by describing the NNWSs' uprising, she wills it into existence. Quoting Martin Luther King's assertion that 'freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed' (a 'meme' with this quote was also shared on ICAN's Instagram and Twitter accounts), Fihn simultaneously aims to convince outsiders of the nobility of ICAN's cause and to prepare those already converted for counter-resistance.[92] In fact, in ICAN's official communication, the term 'resistance' is often used to describe the countermoves of the nuclear-armed states: ICAN supporters must push on 'despite the strong resistance from nuclear-armed nations';[93] likeminded states should 'work in close partnership with civil society to bring about a nuclear weapons ban regardless of resistance from states possessing the weapons;'[94] 'resistance to a treaty banning nuclear weapons is inevitable.'[95] More accurately, this was counter-resistance to the initiative's resistance to established nuclear power structures.

On social media platforms Twitter, Facebook and Instagram – important outreach tools for disarmament advocates – the hashtag '#resist' accompanied countless messages about the humanitarian imperative and urgency of nuclear abolition. 'Join the resistance!' exclaimed several

[90] Matthew Bolton and Elizabeth Minor, 'The Discursive Turn Arrives in Turtle Bay', *Global Policy* 7, no. 3 (2016).
[91] Beatrice Fihn, 'A Silent Battle for Power', *Huffington Post*, 11 September 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/beatrice-fihn/a-silent-battle-of-power_b_8508882.html.
[92] Beatrice Fihn, 'A Silent Battle for Power', *Huffington Post*, 11 September 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/beatrice-fihn/a-silent-battle-of-power_b_8508882.html.
[93] ICAN, 'Ban Nuclear Weapons', October 2015, http://www.icanw.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/ICAN-Australia-2015.pdf, 4.
[94] ICAN, 'Ban Nuclear Weapons Now', July 2013, http://www.icanw.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/BanNuclearWeaponsNow.pdf, 3.
[95] ICAN, statement to the UN OEWG on nuclear disarmament, Geneva, 11 May 2016, http://www.icanw.org/campaign-news/public-and-parliamentary-support-for-a-treaty-banning-nuclear-weapons/.

tweets urging users to sign up to ICAN's call for the prohibition of nuclear weapons.[96] 'We are the resistance and we are banning nuclear weapons this year', tweeted ICAN's official account on 22 January 2017.[97] This and other social media posts were illustrated with pictures of Princess Leia, a leader of the 'Rebel Alliance' in the fictional *Star Wars* universe. On blogs and in mainstream media publications, ICAN's campaign was described as a struggle against 'diplomatic colonialism' and the humanitarian initiative as an 'uprising' of non-nuclear states.[98]According to an ICAN press release disseminated on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the humanitarian initiative constitutes 'a revolutionary movement' of NNWSs and NGOs.[99] For Ray Acheson, director of Reaching Critical Will (the disarmament programme of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) and an influential figure within the campaign, the humanitarian initiative and push for a ban treaty (more about the ban treaty later) represented 'a revolt of the vast majority of states against the violence, intimidation, and injustice perpetuated by those supporting these weapons of mass destruction.'[100] Writing in the *First Committee Monitor*, a publication of Reaching Critical Will read by many campaigners and disarmament diplomats, Acheson makes it clear that her use of the term 'revolt' is by no means casual. Rather, it is informed by critical theory and literature: 'Camus explored the theme of revolt across many books and novels, finding that struggle not only "gives value to life" but also that it is an obligation, even in the face of adversity, power, and overwhelming odds'.[101] Acheson's writing clearly illustrates the idea that resistance is often experienced as autotelic, i.e. as worthwhile in and of itself.

(Deceased) moral authorities and resistance heroes like Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King Jr are often enlisted to the cause of disarmament. The front page of ICAN's website sports a 'meme' featuring actor Martin Sheen (who is a proclaimed supporter of ICAN) stating that 'if Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr were alive today, they would be part of ICAN.'[102] 'We are inspired by Nelson Mandela, who viewed the struggle against the nuclear weapon as inextricably intertwined with the struggles to end racism and colonialism', the Norwegian branch of ICAN proclaims on its website: Mandela 'fought for ending legislated minority rule in all its manifestations, be it the apartheid regime or the international framework of the nuclear weapons regime.'[103] Together, these representations are meant to add weight to the

[96] E.g. ICAN (@nuclearban), tweet on 29 June 2017, https://twitter.com/nuclearban/status/880438887906148352.
[97] ICAN (@nuclearban), tweet on 22 January 2017, https://twitter.com/nuclearban/status/823095142752153600.
[98] Greg Mello, 'NPT consensus failure a good thing', *Pressenza*, 10 June 2015, http://www.pressenza.com/2015/06/npt-consensus-failure-a-good-thing-108-countries-pledge-to-help-ban-nuclear-weapons/ (accessed 28 December 2016); Daniela Varano and Rebecca Johnson, 'NPT: nuclear colonialism versus democratic disarmament', *Open Democracy*, 21 May 2015, https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/rebecca-johnson-daniela-varano/npt-nuclear-colonialism-versus-democratic-disarmament; Tobias Matern, 'Auf UN-Agenda', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 21 August 2016, http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/atomwaffen-auf-un-agenda-1.3130428; Dan Zak, 'U.N. nuclear conference collapses over WMD-free zone in the Middle East', *Washington Post*, 22 May 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/un-nuclear-conference-collapses-over-wmd-free-zone-in-the-middle-east/2015/05/22/8c568380-fe39-11e4-8c77-bf274685e1df_story.html?utm_term=.ce68d3a3b977.
[99] ICAN, 'Media Update: 70 Years Since the Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki', 2015.
[100] Ray Acheson, 'Revolt', *First Committee Monitor*, no 5, 31 October 2016, http://reachingcriticalwill.org/disarmament-fora/unga/2016/fcm/11259-2016-no-5.
[101] Ray Acheson, 'Revolt', *First Committee Monitor*, no 5, 31 October 2016, http://reachingcriticalwill.org/disarmament-fora/unga/2016/fcm/11259-2016-no-5).
[102] ICAN, http://www.icanw.org (accessed 27 November 2016).
[103] ICAN Norway, 'Next Stop: South Africa', http://www.icannorway.no/campaign-news/next-stop-south-africa/#.WGK8z7GZP-Z.

cause of disarmament, presenting it as a noble and radical movement to end oppression. Nuclear weapons are 'morally intolerable and illegitimate instruments of terror', Fihn argues.[104] For Acheson, the states supporting the ban movement are acting 'as part of a broader movement of governments and civil societies seeking to build a world that does not rely on violence as the currency of power, but rather on cooperation, peace, and justice.'[105] The humanitarian 'uprising', in other words, is an urgent struggle for justice.

Images of resistance and struggle for justice have also been promoted by NNWSs in the TAN. '[T]here is no force that can stop the steady march of those who believe in human security, democracy and international law', argued the Costa Rican official Maritza Chan at the 2015 NPT Review Conference, adding that history 'honors only the brave, those who have the courage to think differently and dream of a better future for all.'[106] In an article for the journal *Global Policy*, Chan proclaimed, on behalf of her country, that 'we are proud to stand on the front lines in the battle for a nuclear-free world.'[107] The South African delegation to the 2015 NPT Review Conference argued that, '[g]iven that 45 years have now passed since the entry-into-force of the Treaty [the NPT], we can no longer afford to strike hollow agreements every five years which only seem to perpetuate the status quo. The time has come to bring a decisive end to what amounts to "*nuclear apartheid*".'[108] The 'overwhelming support' for the humanitarian initiative among NNWSs and civil society actors, argued the Kenyan delegation to the UN General Assembly in 2014, 'demonstrates the growing opposition to the constant threat that nuclear weapons pose. People are beginning to stand up. Very soon they will say "*enough*".'[109] Confronting the legalistic justifications for nuclear hegemony, New Zealand argued in 2014 that the NPT 'was never about creating a permanent right for some to retain nuclear weapons. Article VI of the Treaty promised that at some point beyond the Treaty's adoption in 1968, effective measures would be put in place leading to nuclear disarmament.' After more than four decades without such measures being implemented, 'non-nuclear-weapon States certainly have a right to ask, if not now, when?'[110] For Guatemala, the humanitarian initiative reflected the urgency with which NNWSs saw the matter of nuclear disarmament. It was time for the NNWSs to 'act and break the deadlock' despite the NWSs' attempts at protecting the status quo.[111] For the Jamaican diplomat Shorna-Kay Richards, the 'principles of equality and justice are at the core' of the humanitarian approach. The humanitarian initiative, in her view, had empowered NNWSs, proving 'that the non-nuclear weapons States have a say in nuclear disarmament issues. Our voice



[104] Beatrice Fihn, 'From Hiroshima to Marshall Islands', *Huffington Post*, 28 August 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/beatrice-fihn/from-hiroshima-to-marshal_b_8056856.html.
[105] Ray Acheson, 'Uprising', *NPT News in Review* 13, no. 17 (2015).
[106] Costa Rica, statement to the 2015 NPT RevCon, New York, 22 May 2015, http://reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/npt/revcon2015/statements/22May_CostaRica.pdf.
[107] Maritza Chan, 'Non-Nuclear Weapons States Must Lead in Shaping International Norms on Nuclear Weapons', *Global Policy* 7, no. 3 (2016).
[108] South Africa, statement to the 2015 NPT RevCon, New York, 29 April 2015, http://reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/npt/revcon2015/statements/29April_SouthAfrica.pdf. Emphasis in original.
[109] Kenya, statement to the UNGA First Committee, A/C.1/69/PV.6, New York, 13 October 2014, 7. Emphasis in original.
[110] New Zealand, statement to the UNGA First Committee, A/C.1/69/PV.3, New York, 8 October 2014, 21.
[111] Guatemala, A statement to the UNGA First Committee, /C.1/70/PV.11, New York, 21 October 2015, 8.

matters. We have agency.'[112] The heightened sense of empowerment among NNWS officials is a testament to the TAN's successful reshaping of its own constituents' subjectivities. The rhetoric of resistance emboldened NNWS officials to support radical measures, 'refashioning the subject within power'.[113]

### *3.4 Banning nuclear weapons*

Next to the strategic reframing of nuclear weapons, formation of a TAN and development of a radical counter-discourse rooted in the idea of resistance, a fourth major action undertaken to challenge the NWSs' grip on the nuclear discourse was to campaign for, and bring about, the negotiation of a nuclear weapons prohibition treaty. For many of the humanitarian initiative's supporters, the purpose of the movement had always been to pave the way for such negotiations. The fact that the NWSs and many of their allies would almost certainly not sign such an instrument was precisely the point: the purpose of the new treaty was not first and foremost to regulate the destruction of nuclear stockpiles, but to codify and broadcast its signatories' resistance to the status quo and their collective expectations of change. In contrast to the vaguely worded NPT, which leaders of the NWSs argue gives them a 'right' to possess nuclear weapons,[114] the new treaty would render it impossible for the NWSs to plead special entitlements. The institutional power of a formal treaty under UN auspices would give advocates of disarmament a potentially powerful tool to shake up the established discourse and revalidate the importance of nuclear disarmament.[115]

The successful alignment of nuclear disarmament with humanitarian law established and embedded a logical new norm that nuclear weapons should be subject to a legal prohibition to precipitate their elimination in order to prevent their use and the unacceptable consequences that would follow. This new, or perhaps rehabilitated, nuclear narrative and its norms of behaviour centred on a formal prohibition were successfully cascaded through the wider TAN by a core group of states and NGOs. Indeed, the campaign for a ban fits well with Finnemore and Sikkink's model of the 'life cycle' of norms as a process of 'emergence', 'cascade' and 'internalisation'.[116] The treaty's endorsement and promulgation by moral authorities like the ICRC and the Holy See was an important step in this process.[117] The adoption of the ban treaty as the humanitarian initiative's chief practical aim was itself an expression of productive power exercised within the TAN. Indeed, the exercise of productive power both within and by the TAN was intrinsic to the development and cascade of a specific norm of universal legal prohibition nested within a web of established norms, rules and institutions. In particular, the shift in the

[112] Shorna-Kay Richards, lecture in Mexico City, 7 July 2016, http://www.nonproliferation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Presentation-at-2016-Summer-School-on-Nuclear-Disarmament-and-Non-proliferation-FINAL-1.pdf.

[113] James Brassett, 'British Comedy, Global Resistance', *European Journal of International Relations* 22, no. 1 (2016): 174. Emphasis original.

[114] Nick Ritchie, 'Valuing and Devaluing Nuclear Weapons', *Contemporary Security Policy* 34, no. 1 (2013): 157.

[115] Kjølv Egeland, 'Kjølv Egeland, 'Banning the Bomb: Inconsequential Posturing or Meaningful Stigmatization?', *Global Governance* 24, no. 1 (2018).

[116] Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change', *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998).

[117] On the role of 'agenda vetting' in transnational advocacy networks see Louise Amore, 'Situating Resistance' in *The Global Resistance Reader*, ed. Amore (London: Routledge, 2005); Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, 'Transnational Advocacy Networks in International and Regional Politics', *International Social Science Journal* 51, no. 159 (1999).

Non-Aligned Movement orthodoxy and the preferences of some NGOs (including ICAN) from preferring an all-encompassing Nuclear Weapons Convention to acceptance of a ban treaty as a necessary and achievable interim step was an important part of the process. Moreover, capturing the delegitimation of nuclear weapons in a legal instrument under UN auspices would translate the productive power of the humanitarian initiative into institutional and compulsory power.

The campaign for a nuclear weapons ban was first championed by ICAN, but as time went on, more and more NNWS governments planted their flags in the ban camp. Between 2012 and 2016, a growing number of states explicitly spoke out in favour of the idea of adopting a treaty banning nuclear weapons. In practical terms, the idea of adopting a new legal instrument was pursued in two UN Open-Ended Working Groups (OEWG) on nuclear disarmament. The first of these groups, convened in Geneva in 2013, was mandated by the 67th UN General Assembly (2012–2013). Despite counter-resistance by the NWSs, a large majority of the UN's member states agreed to 'develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons'.[118] The process to move towards a negotiating mandate for a prohibition treaty really gathered momentum after the failure of the 2015 NPT RevCon to agree a final consensus document. The political fallout of the RevCon led to the approval by the UN General Assembly in October 2015 of a second UN Open-Ended Working Group on multilateral nuclear disarmament. The group met during 2016 and recommended 'the convening, by the General Assembly, of a conference in 2017 […] to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination.'[119] The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted by majority vote on 7 July 2017.

For many of the humanitarian initiative TAN's core actors, the NWSs' reaction to the proposed ban seemed to demonstrate its potential. While in public arguing that the ban would either be ignored or have only negative impacts on disarmament efforts, US officials secretly instructed NATO allies to vote against the convening of ban-treaty negotiations because they believed a ban could delegitimise nuclear deterrence.[120] Other NWSs made similar statements. Russian officials arguably went further in their critique of the ban, labelling the strategy 'catastrophic'.[121] This 'counter-resistance' and 'counter-framing' was to be expected. Forms of resistance and dissent that challenge established power structures are often 'interpreted as a threat to be contained or eliminated', as Coleman and Tucker note.[122]

While the ban treaty may itself be understood as an expression of institutional power – insofar as its supporters are attempting to indirectly influence and constrain behaviour via the treaty – the process that led to its adoption was also in part brought about through the exercise of institutional power. Aided by the growing openness of UN fora and diplomatic conferences to NGO participation,[123] the champions of the ban treaty relied on the legitimacy and authority of existing institutions like the UN and NPT to build support for the initiative. Taking the

[118] UN General Assembly, 'Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations', A/67/57, New York, 4 January 2013.
[119] UN General Assembly, 'Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations', A/71/371, 1 New York, September 2016, 18.
[120] See ICAN, 'US pressured NATO states to vote not to a ban', 1 November 2016, http://www.icanw.org/campaign-news/us-pressures-nato-states-to-vote-no-to-the-ban-treaty/.
[121] Russia, statement to the UNGA First Committee, A/C.1/71/PV.22, New York, 27 October 2016, 21.
[122] Lara M. Coleman and Karen Tucker, 'Between Discipline and Dissent', *Globalizations* 8, no. 4 (2011): 405.
[123] Peter Willetts, *Non-Governmental Organisation in World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2011), 133.

humanitarian initiative and idea of a ban treaty to the established forums, the TAN was able to use the very institutions that tacitly legitimise nuclear weapons to instead delegitimise them.[124] The shift from ad hoc intergovernmental conferences to a formal UN process was therefore a key development. The second OEWG in 2016 was pivotal. It brought the initiative and the idea of a ban treaty into the UN architecture and imbued it with considerable institutional power. This further legitimised the initiative's discourse and gave it political momentum. The treaty's proponents explicitly argued that a prohibition treaty as well as other measures identified by the 2016 UN Open-Ended Working Group would constitute the 'effective measures' for nuclear disarmament called for under the NPT's Article VI. The global South has a long history of disarmament activism at the UN, primarily through the collective of the Non-Aligned Movement, which has framed disarmament and development as inter-related issues. The UN is the premier vehicle through which less powerful states can create new institutions and instruments to promote alternative norms, rules and goals to those of the major powers.[125] It was promoted as the primary forum for disarmament owing to its inclusivity as a world organisation and what Inis Claude identified as its powerful collective legitimation function.[126] The UN, then, 'offered a platform on which all states were represented and, if organised in large groups, could influence the conduct of world politics. This UN potential was explored by NAM, and its members learned how to use the system to their own advantage.'[127]

The treaty hold-outs, which are primarily nuclear-armed states and their allies, cannot be forced to join the treaty and disarm, but they will be affected by it because it is embedded in the authority of two core institutions of global nuclear governance: the United Nations and the NPT. This reflects a third form of power exercised by the TAN: compulsory power. This, however, takes a very specific form of normative censure. Barnett and Duvall make the point that '[c]ompulsory power is not limited to material resources; it also entails symbolic and normative resources'.[128] The TAN has tried to exercise direct compulsory normative power to compel states to change their policies through normative censure, a process that will be aided by the negotiation of the prohibition treaty. Some have also attempted to exercise compulsory power through a nuclear weapons divestment campaign.

## Conclusion

Identifying how international power structures are challenged and transformed through collective action is crucial to understanding change in international relations. The humanitarian initiative demonstrates how a network of the relatively disempowered can affect global politics through practices of resistance. As reflected by the 122 states that voted for it, the sharp counter-resistance from the nuclear-armed, and the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to ICAN, the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was a major diplomatic achievement. The humanitarian initiative, we have argued, is best be understood as a multi-

[124] Nick Ritchie, 'Legitimizing and Delegitimizing Nuclear Weapons', in *Viewing Nuclear Weapons through a Humanitarian Lens*, eds John Borrie and Tim Caughley (Geneva: UNIDIR, 2013).
[125] Adam Bower, 'Norms Without the Great Powers', *International Studies Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (2015): 349.
[126] Inis Claude, 'Collective Legitimization as a Political Function of the United Nations', *International Organization* 20, no. 3 (1966).
[127] Dan Plesch, 'The South and disarmament at the UN', *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 7 (2016): 1211.
[128] Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, 'Power in International Politics', *International Organization* 59, no. 1 (2005): 50.

layered social resistance movement characterised by the following features: it was oppositional, creative and heterogeneous nature; it was anchored in clear but flexible set of principled ideas; it was connected to wider struggles against oppressive power structures; it was embedded in historical experience and it was enacted in traditional diplomatic arenas. These seven features, we claim, make up a family resemblance characteristic of what we call 'the diplomacy of resistance'.[129]

The purpose of the humanitarian initiative was to challenge the set of hegemonic structures and practices that selectively legitimise, regulate, and discipline the appropriation of nuclear weapons, technologies, materials and knowledge. According to the architects of the initiative, this oligarchic global nuclear structure was held in place by a web of concepts, preconceptions, assumptions and cultural narratives that legitimised the existence of nuclear weapons, not least the nuclear arsenals of the five states defined by the NPT as 'nuclear-weapon states'. Changing the 'nuclear discourse', they believed, was necessary (though not sufficient) to bring about a world without nuclear weapons. Given the absence of media attention and mass public protest that might galvanise change at the national level, the humanitarian initiative's architects focused their efforts on the diplomatic level. Drawing on Cox, we have argued that the humanitarian initiative constitutes a form of counter-hegemony within global nuclear politics. Constructing this counter-hegemony involved discursive and diplomatic strategies to effect change through existing and new institutions and intellectual resources. The extent to which this is novel or transformatory remains to be seen. The initiative can certainly be framed as the latest turn in 'cycle of protest' against nuclear weapons, but in the context of the repetitive gridlocked politics of nuclear disarmament of the past two decades it surely represents an important change.

To challenge the established nuclear discourse, the actors driving the humanitarian initiative relied on a varied repertoire of contention, namely: the use of productive power to reframe nuclear weapons as 'strategic social construction'; mobilising and coordinating a network of the like-minded (in this case a fluid transnational 'network of networks'); cohering and validating the network through resistance rhetoric, and channelling resistance into a new legal instrument as the logical outcome of the reframing move. The diplomacy of resistance cannot be understood without serious engagement with structures and relations of power. A power-analytic approach illuminates the processes, opportunities and limits of the humanitarian initiative. Our analysis shows that the power of the network is intrinsic to the diplomacy of resistance. The primarily normative basis of power exercised by the humanitarian initiative is a function of an obvious but fundamental asymmetry of power between the nuclear and non-nuclear armed: the initiative does not have the power to change nuclear-weapons policies directly. Instead, they necessarily have to pursue indirect means through a diplomacy of resistance, in this case by changing the legal and normative context in which nuclear-armed states and their supporters make decisions about nuclear weapons. In order to level the playing field against the nuclear-armed states and their allies – large, wealthy, veto-wielding states with considerable power (compulsory, structural, institutional and productive) – the supporters of the humanitarian initiative relied on 'information politics', network building, and strength in numbers. The movement's effectiveness was to a large extent down to its key members' ability to cultivate a coalitional logic that allowed actors with different ideas and agendas to pull in the same direction.

[129] For Wittgenstein, concepts have no 'essential core' of meaning. Rather, concepts describe a 'network' of 'overlapping and criss-crossing' phenomena. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 36 (para. 66).

Through the dissemination of reports and articles, social media outreach and official statements to diplomatic forums, core actors in the transnational advocacy network that constituted the humanitarian initiative developed an effective counter-discourse. This highlighted the testimonies of victims of nuclear violence and the massive humanitarian and environmental harm from nuclear detonations, and it rejected the legitimacy of nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence. As their immediate and most important goal, the supporters of the initiative pushed the idea of delegitimising nuclear weapons by negotiating a treaty to ban them. This translated the productive power of the network into institutional power through the authority of UN to create a new legal instrument that would become a tool for the exercise of normative-legal compulsory power. The power of the network stemmed both from its numbers, in terms of the size of the network, and authority, in terms of the type of actors and their authoritative relationship to the issue(s) of concern, not least those with substantial moral authority such as the Hibakusha, Vatican and ICRC. The number and type of actors in a network affects the authority of the discourse (productive power), access to and effect through institutions and how these combine to effect wider change, for example through legal-normative compulsory power. The power of the humanitarian initiative therefore relates in many ways to Arendt's definition of power as a collective action: power *is* the ability to act in concert, whether to legitimise, compel or resist.[130] Power, as something quite distinct from violence or resources, 'always stands in need of numbers'.[131]

Moulding and sustaining the network itself has also been an exercise of power, primarily structural and productive power within the network. It is about discourses of normative requirements in relation to an issue (something should be done), of legitimate subjects (we are the ones that should do it) and of conditions of possibility (we can effect change). It also involves institutional power of sorts insofar as actors within a network are not all in direct relationships with each other but are affected indirectly through the network. The network, here, takes on the form of an informal institution of rules, norms and practices influenced by those actors that constitute the network's core nodes, for example the Norwegian foreign ministry, ICAN, the ICRC, and the wider Geneva community of NGOs, IGOs, and diplomats in the case of the humanitarian initiative. These actors play a central role in the mobilisation of a wider network of networks through articulation of discourses and agenda setting, or 'agenda vetting', as Carpenter puts it.[132] Structural position (and hence structural power) within a network clearly matters, but in the more discrete setting of a TAN, productive power is key, even though structural position, material resources, and institutional practices are significant.[133]

The negotiation of the TPNW is a formidable achievement, but the prospect of significant change in nuclear policies remains uncertain. The actors and networks comprising the TAN lack material compulsory power. The productive power to shape the systems of meaning around the illegitimacy of nuclear weapons can be effective, but advocates of disarmament are competing with other systems of meaning and deeply embedded 'nuclearised' identities in which nuclear weapons are highly valued and that will be difficult to transform. The TAN may have successfully exercised institutional power through the UN and NPT, but the likely result in the

[130] Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (London: Penguin, 1969), 44.
[131] Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (London: Penguin, 1969), 42.
[132] Carli Carpenter, 'Vetting the Advocacy Agenda', *International Organization* 65, no. 1 (2011).
[133] Kathryn Sikkink, 'The Power of Networks in International Politics', in *Networked Politics*, ed. Miles Kahler (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 240.

short–medium term will be continued division in the NPT. This will only change when the weight of normative pressure for a shift in nuclear weapons policies by the nuclear-armed, combined with other pressures and incentives, becomes irresistible. More importantly, the TAN lacks structural power. The nuclear-armed states and their supporters, in contrast, enjoy considerable structural power not just through the structures of global nuclear politics, but through other military, economic and political privileges. It is this structural power that places the non-nuclear-armed in the position of nuclear subordination that is now being actively resisted and challenged through the humanitarian initiative and the prohibition treaty.

The literature on transnational advocacy networks and Barnett and Duvall's power-resistance framework are important conceptual tools to help us understand the significant political effects of the humanitarian initiative. Nevertheless, the initiative and the prohibition treaty paint a more complex picture that can be explained through the 'diplomacy of resistance' presented here. More broadly, this case demonstrates that understanding how hierarchical international power structures are challenged and transformed through collective action is crucial to developing a more robust account of international relations.